

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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R 281740Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3017
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AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 3153

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: SOCIALIST PARTY TORN BY DISSENT

REF: ROME 3059

1. SUMMARY. DECISION OF SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI) PARLIAMEN-
TARIANS NOT TO SUPPORT MOTION TO ARRAIGN FORMER PM
RUMOR BEFORE PARLIAMENT IN LOCKHEED SCANDAL PROVOKED
IMMEDIATE NEGATIVE REACTION FROM GRASSROOTS AND SPLIT
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF PARTY. DISSIDENTS "OCCUPIED"
NATIONAL PSI HEADQUARTERS AND CALLED FOR MEETING OF
PARTY DIRECTORATE AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE. CONTINUED
TENURE OF PARTY SECRETARY CRAXI CALLED IN QUESTION. INTERNAL
PARTY STRIFE FORCED POSTPONEMENT OF SCHEDULED BILATERAL
MEETINGS BETWEEN PSI AND OTHER PARTIES. MOVEMENT TO
UNFREEZE DC-PSI RELATIONS HAS ALMOST SURELY BEEN ARRESTED
ON PSI SIDE JUST AS DC EXPONENTS WERE WARMING
TO IDEA. EPISODE SHOWS THAT PSI, EVEN WITH LARGE IN-
FUSIONS OF YOUNG BLOOD IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, HAS
FAILED TO GIVE ITSELF A POSITIVE POLITICAL LINE.

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END SUMMARY.

2. REFTEL REPORTED THE DECISION TAKEN FEB. 24 BY THE
PSI PARLIAMENTARIANS NOT TO SUPPORT THE RADICAL PARTY
MOTION TO ARRAIGN PM RUMOR BEFORE PARLIAMENT IN THE
LOCKHEED SCANDAL. THE PARLIAMENTARIANS' DECISION
WAS REACHED IN A STORMY MEETING, AND WAS MADE ON THE

BASIS OF A VERY NARROW MAJORITY. THE PARTY'S LEFT WING, WHICH HAD TAKEN A STRONG POSITION IN FAVOR OF RUMOR'S INCRIMINATION, ISSUED A DISSENTING STATEMENT. BEHIND THE SCENES, THE DISSIDENTS ALERTED THEIR RANK-AND-FILE ALLIES, AND BY THE EVENING OF FEB. 24 GROUPS OF PSI ACTIVISTS WERE GATHERING IN PSI NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS.

3. ON FEBRUARY 25, THE ARRIVAL OF ADDITIONAL ACTIVISTS AT PARTY HEADQUARTERS TURNED THE SITUATION INTO A VIRTUAL SIEGE. PARTY SECRETARY BETTINO CRAXI, WHO HAD PROVIDED THE MACINI-DE MARTINO FACTION WITH THE MARGIN OF VICTORY OVER THE PARTY'S LEFT, REFUSED FOR FIVE HOURS EITHER TO MEET WITH THE DISSIDENTS OR TO LEAVE HIS OFFICE. WHEN CRAXI FINALLY EMERGED FROM HIS OFFICE, TENSIONS HAD RISEN TO THE POINT THAT DIALOGUE WAS IMPOSSIBLE. TEMPERS FLARED, AND THE PARTY SECRETARY DEPARTED IN ANGER FOR A SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT. AMID THE TURMOIL CAME THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT CRAXI HAD ASKED LEADERS OF THE DC AND PCI TO POSTPONE THE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 2 AND 4.

4. REACTION TO THE DECISION FROM THE PARTY'S GRASS-ROOTS MAY HAVE BEEN GENERATED BY THE PARTY'S LEFT WING LEADERS, BUT THE SIZE OF THAT REACTION IS NEVERTHELESS IMPRESSIVE. PARTY HEADQUARTERS HAS BEEN FLOODED BY TELEGRAMS, TELEPHONE CALLS AND DOCUMENTS OF PROTEST. THE THREE COMMON THREADS RUNNING THROUGH THE PROTEST ARE: 1) OPPOSITION TO ANY HINT OF RENEWED CONFIDENTIAL

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COOPERATION WITH THE DC, 2) CRITICISM OF FORMER PARTY GIACOMO MANCINI, ACCUSED OF BARTERING VOTES WITH THE DC IN ORDER TO WIN EVENTUAL ABSOLUTION IN A HIGHWAY SCANDAL, AND 3) THE CALL FOR CONVOCAION OF THE PARTY'S GOVERNING ORGANS IN ORDER TO JUDGE THE LEADERSHIP OF CRAXI AND HIS SECRETARIAT.

5. PARTY SECRETARY CRAXI'S INITIAL REACTION TO THE PROTEST STRESSED THAT THE PARLIAMENTARIANS HAD REFUSED TO TURN A JUDICIAL MATTER INTO A PARTY POLITICAL ISSUE. HE CRITICIZED THOSE WHO SEE THE UPCOMING LOCKHEED DEBATE AS A "POLITICAL TRIAL OF THE REGIME," AND ADDED THAT EVEN THOUGH THE PSI HAS REJECTED CONTINUATION OF THE CENTER-LEFT FORMULA, THE PARTY DOES NOT CONSIDER THE CENTER-LEFT AS A "REGIME" WHICH MUST BE TRIED AND JUDGED. LATER, DURING A NEWS CONFERENCE, CRAXI PROMISED THAT THE PARTY'S POLITICAL LINE WILL NOT BE ALTERED BY CONCESSIONS TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. HE SAID THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO

THINK OF "REPROPOSING OLD POLITICAL EXPERIENCES WHICH
ONCE SERVED THEIR PURPOSE."

6. CRAXI'S PREDICAMENT IS EVIDENT FROM THE POSITIONS
TAKEN BY THE OTHER FOUR MEMBERS OF THE PARTY'S
"COLLEGIAL" SECRETARIAT, WHICH HAS BEEN THE DRIVING
FORCE BEHIND THE RECENT EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE AND
REJUVENATE THE PARTY. ONLY TWO MEMBERS OF THE
SECRETARIAT, LAURICELLA AND LANDOLFI, HAVE NOT
TAKEN PUBLIC POSITIONS DIFFERENT THAN CRAXI'S. A
THIRD MEMBER, SIGNORILE, HAS SIDED OPENLY WITH
THE PARTY'S LEFT WING. THE FOURTH, ENRICO MACA,
HAS ASSERTED THAT HE WANTED TO INCRIMINATE RUMOR, BUT
ADMITTED THAT HE DID NOT DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO
SWING THE PARLIAMENTARIANS' VOTE. MACA, WHO
DOES LITTLE TO CONCEAL HIS DESIRE TO SUCCEED CRAXI
(SEE ROME 2863), SUGGESTED THAT THE PARTY FOLLOW
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HIS EXAMPLE AND ENGAGE IN "AUTOCRITICISM." PAOLO
VITTORELLI, EDITOR OF THE PARTY DAILY AVANTI
AND AN ALLY OF MANCA, TOOK THE SAME LINE. VITTORELLI
DEFENDED THE PLAN FOR BILATERAL ENCOUNTERS WITH THE
OTHER PARTIES, SAYING THAT THOSE ENCOUNTERS MIGHT LEAD
TO AGREEMENT ON AN EMERGENCY PROGRAM FOR THE COUNTRY,
WHICH IS THE BEST THING FOR WHICH THE PSI CAN HOPE
AS LONG AS THE DC REFUSES TO ACCEPT THE
CONCEPT OF A GOVERNMENT OF EMERGENCY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 3153

7. A PSI SOURCE CLOSE TO CRAXI TOLD EMBOFF THAT CRAXI NOW BELIEVES THE PARLIAMENTARIANS' DECISION WAS "A MISTAKE." KEY ABSENCES IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES CONTINGENT ALLOWED PSI SENATORS LOYAL TO MANCINI TO PLAY THE DETERMINING ROLE IN THE DECISION. CRAXI STILL HOPES THAT THE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE OTHER PARTIES CAN GO FORWARD, BUT HE HAS NOT SET A NEW TIMETABLE.

8. THE PSI TURMOIL CAME IN THE MIDST OF CONTINUED FRIENDLY SIGNALS FROM THE DC. JUST AS CRAXI'S LEADERSHIP WAS UNDER THE HEAVIEST ATTACK, MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT HOLDINGS BISAGLIA WROTE IN THE DC NEWSPATER THAT BECAUSE THE DC AND PCI DISAGREE ON SO MANY FUNDAMENTAL POINTS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE THOSE PARTIES EVER COOPERATING MORE CLOSELY THAN AT PRESENT. BISAGLIA CALLED EXPLICITLY FOR RENEWED SOCIALIST PRESENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

9. COMMENT. THE EVENTS OF THE LAST FEW DAYS BRING INTO SHARPER FOCUS THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FAILURES OF THE NEW PSI LEADERSHIP DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS.
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AS RECENT REPORTING FROM THE CONSTITUENT POSTS HAS SO CLEARLY POINTED OUT, THE PSI IS INDEED REJUVENATING ITSELF FROM THE GROUND UP. THE PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES HAVE BROUGHT TO THE FORE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT BEHOLDEN TO ANY FACTION OR TRADITIONAL LEADER. THE PARTY APPARATUS HAS STARTED TO FUNCTION IN AREAS PREVIOUSLY DOMINATED BY FACTIONAL LEADERS. THE VERY DIVERSITY OF THE NEW SECRETARIAT AND THE MINORITY NATURE OF CRAXI'S PERSONAL VIEWS HAVE, HOWEVER, MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO GIVE THE PARTY AN OVERALL POLITICAL ORIENTATION. IN THE FACE OF THE TWO TOWERING REALITIES OF ITALIAN POLITICS-- THE DC AND THE PCI-- THE SOCIALISTS ARE WORRIED MOST OF ALL ABOUT SIMPLE SURVIVAL. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT THE CENTER-LEFT CAUSED THE PRESENT WEAKNESS OF THEIR PARTY, AND THEY ARE HOSTILE TO ANY SUGGESTION OF A NEW ALLIANCE WITH THE DC. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY ARE FEARFUL OF FALLING UNDER PCI HEGEMONY, A FEAR REINFORCED BY RECENT EXPERIENCES IN PCI-PSI LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS. FEARING BOTH POSSIBLE ALLIES AND WITHOUT SUFFICIENT POLICY ORIENTATION, SOCIALISTS TODAY FIND IT RELATIVELY

EASY TO BE AGAINST ALMOST ANYTHING, BUT DIFFICULT TO
BE FOR ANYTHING CONCRETE. THEIR POLITICAL REACTIONS
TEND TO BE EXTREME ONES OF THE KNEE-JERK VARIETY.
THUS , THE FIRST ATTEMPT BY THE PARTY SECRETARIAT TO
OPEN A TENTATIVE PROGRAMMATIC DIALOGUE WITH THE DC
HAS FOUNDERED AT A VERY EARLY STAGE. THE PSI MAY HAVE
SAVED RUMOR, BUT ONLY AT THE EXPENSE OF PUBLICLY
ADVERTISING ITS LACK OF UNITY AND LACK OF PREPAREDNESS
TO SUPPORT THE KIND OF INITIATIVE TOWARD THE DC ENVISAGED
BY SOME SOCIALIST LEADERS. THE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS
MAY BE HELD AFTER THE LOCKHEED QUESTION HAS BEEN DECIDED
BY THE PARLIAMENT, BUT CHANCES ARE THAT THE CON-
SULTATIONS WILL BE REDUCED IN SCOPE FROM THE AMBITIOUS
PROJECT ENVISAGED BY MANCA (SEE ROME 2863). WHILE THE TROUBLES
IN THE PSI MAY PUT OFF TEMPORARILY ITS (AND OTHERS') SEARCH
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FOR AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT, THOSE TROUBLES
MAY AT THE SAME TIME WEAKEN THE
GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO ACHIEVE THE CONSENSUS NECESSARY FOR NEW
MEASURES.BEAUDRY

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